

Letter from Henry J. Leplastrier to Alexander Graham Bell, June 30, 1889, with transcript

Claudeville, St. James Park Hawthorn, Melbourne 30 June 1889 My dear Cousin

I ought to have written to you before but I have been so upset in mind and body that I have been obliged to put off all letter writing — But dear Frances will not allow me to put it off any longer so here you have all the news compressed into a few lines — You will have known that for many months past I have been in a terrible state of anxiety as after a consultation of 3 of the best Doctors here, it was stated that poor Frances had a very bad tumor of over 2 years growth. It was arranged on the 19 May that the operation was to be performed for £100 and having agreed to this, I was in daily expectation of being called upon for the payment, but, strange to say on the 8 inst. the poor old girl was taken in 2 and at 8 o'clock in the evening a very nice little girl made its presence known in the usual manner. To cut a long story short, she is getting on as well, or better than could be expected, and as I write, on Sunday evening, she is lookin really quite maternal —

Frances is very sorry to hear of Mrs. Bell & the children have been so unwell and she is always talking of you all so that I seem to know you all tolerably well especially as I have your photos very handsomely framed in black & gold with pretty glass in the centre — They have been framed in one picture, and I have also the photo of Frances, and yourself in the Indian chiefs costume — also the pencil illustration of the telephone which you may recollect giving to her when in Boston — I have it framed between 2 glasses so that both sides can be read, and I have had some idea of sending it to our national Museum where it would be highly prized but have BEEN PERSUADED TO KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY, at all events for the present.

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Frances with her best love wishes to know whether you are willing to be one of the godfathers of the darlin ; and would like to know as soon as possible as she will not have the Christening until your reply has been received — She would write herself but has to be kept quiet for some time yet — We are expecting to get the photo of your younger child very shortly —

You will no doubt be glad to learn that the telephone is very greatly used in our City and at the Custom House we have communication with all our suburban stations, and although the longest distance is only 13 miles the result is extremely satisfactory — We are looking out for something else from you in the scientific line —

Frances did not get the newspaper that was sent giving an account of your school at Washington but se read the one that was sent to her Father and we were both very much interested therein — We are now in the dull season in this Colony, and although things are very prosperous with us things in the adjoining Colony of N.S. Wales have been very bad by reason of fearful droughts which have been the cause of hundreds of thousands of sheep and many thousands of cattle being lost but as the rains have since fallen it is hoped that a few months will bring about a change for the better —

With best love from Frances and with the very kindest regards from myself believe me to be

Your affectionate Cousin Henry J. Leplastrier Dearest love to Mabel and yourself and to the dear little girls.